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ABSTRACT

Three conditions characterize employment in France today: (1) high unemployment; (2) the importance of degrees in employment; and (3) significant differences between the sexes. The differences between national government initiatives and regional issues also are of concern. The main strategic issues facing career development focus on reducing unemployment. Some of the suggested approaches include preparing graduates for the workplace, developing qualifying skills training for small business, and validating the skills and qualifications acquired on the job. One key issue for the future is maintaining the structure of information and guidance centers. Another is the issue of social and workplace integration of young people from various cultures. Unequal access to relevant information on training, careers, and employment is a key factor contributing to social problems. Several recommendations for actions required for problem solving include: reforming student guidance-allocation procedures in secondary schools; giving information and guidance centers legal status, clarifying their mission, and coordinating their activities with those of other structures; supervising practices; and providing universal access to accurate, relevant information on training and careers. Appendices include: "Statistical Data from Generation 92" and "The Devaluation of Degrees." (Contains 22 references.) (JDM)

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Career Development and Public Policy in France

By

Jean Guichard

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13. CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY IN FRANCE

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Background: Structure of the Education System in France and Career Integration of Young People

Jurisdiction and Administration

Education in France is governed by a number of general principles:

- secular education;
- compulsory education for all children 6 to 16 years of age; and
- free public education during the compulsory schooling period.

All educational institutions are governed by national legislation enacted by the Ministry of National Education. The Minister of National Education and Research and Technology, assisted by a minister responsible for schooling, is responsible for implementing government decisions on education. The national office of the Ministry of National Education includes:

- agencies reporting directly to the Minister's office: staff, general inspections, finance, etc.;
- education branches: schooling branch, higher education branch, etc.; and
- other shared branches and units: teaching staff branch, administrative staff branch, research branch, assessment, programming and development branch, etc.

The Minister of National Education is represented at the regional level by an academic rector. Academies are modelled after the national office. At the departmental level, the rector is represented by an academy inspector and director of departmental services of national education. The heads of public local educational institutions (EPLEs) form the last link in the chain of command for administration and organization.

Private educational institutions come under the authority of various religious congregations, professional associations and even individuals. Many of these institutions, which operate "under contract" with the national government, receive extensive public financial assistance.

The 1982 *Loi de décentralisation* (*Decentralization Act*) and the 1993 legislation on work, employment and career development, redistributed responsibilities between the regions and the national government. Regions

became responsible for lycées, specialized educational institutions and career development, while departments are responsible for "colleges." Elementary schools are governed by municipalities. Teaching and non-teaching staff members, however, are national government employees.

Preschool and Elementary Education

France has a long tradition of preschool education. By age 3, enrolment reaches 98.8 percent (MENRT, 1991). The *Loi d'orientation sur l'éducation* (*Education Reform Act*) of July 10, 1989 reformed the primary school curriculum and came into effect in the fall of 1992. The curriculum from kindergarten to the end of primary school is organized into three teaching cycles:

- the initial learning cycle — kindergarten;
- the basic learning cycle — senior kindergarten, preparatory course and first-year elementary course; and
- the development cycle — second-year elementary course, and the first- and second-year middle courses.

The *Reform Act* introduces more flexibility in learning rates. A board of teachers in each cycle determines whether the child can advance to the next cycle. Parents may challenge and appeal this decision.

Secondary Education

The junior secondary curriculum is delivered in lycées (colleges), which begin with the sixth year. At this point, grades are counted backward, conversely to the number of years completed. Thus, after five years of primary schooling, pupils take Grade 6 (which is also their sixth year of education), followed by Grade 5 (seventh year of education), Grade 4 (eighth year) and Grade 3 (ninth year). Distinctions are made between the adaptation and development cycle (Grade 6: 11 or 12 years of age), the central cycle (grades 5 and 4) and finally, the orientation cycle (Grade 3, 14 to 16 years old).

Completion of the orientation cycle marks a major transition for students

Each student receives an education/training recommendation. If the family disagrees with the recommendation, it may appeal to a board. The student's file is presented to the board by the student's teacher and by the school's guidance counsellor. The board issues a ruling on the student's application.

Since 1983, colleges have been required to develop a teaching plan. They must achieve nationally defined objectives by developing new strategies that reflect local characteristics and the specific student populations they educate.

Lycées provide general, technological or professional instruction, leading to a specific type of baccalaureat

The three years of lycée instruction follow compulsory schooling and are called second, first and final. These correspond to the 10th, 11th and 12th years of schooling, respectively.

Technical education is integrated into the general curriculum. Students enrolled in the general program can now earn a technological baccalaureat after completing the same number of years as the general program (three years), or a professional baccalaureat after four years. (Professional baccalaureat programs accept students with weaker marks than those in the technological programs.)

Completion of Grade 2 marks a second transition for students

At this point (10th year of schooling) students now must choose the general, technological or professional stream. In the last five years, approximately 62 percent of students in a given age group earn a baccalaureat. The vast majority graduate with a general baccalaureat.

Higher Education

Higher education includes:

- public and private universities (each reflecting an instruction and research specialization) (UFR) deliver instruction in law, medicine, literature, science, etc.);
- university institutes of technology (IUT) and technical studies (STS) — two-year programs leading respectively to a DUT (university degree in technology) or BTS (higher technician's licence);
- preparatory years and classic schools of literature, science, commerce, management, accounting, etc. (Along with schools of engineering and medical programs, these are considered the most prestigious.);
- national schools of engineering (The Ministry of National Education, Research and Technology trains more than half of all future engineers.); and
- specialized schools (paramedical, social, legal, administrative, etc.).

Over the last five years, approximately 50 percent of students have enrolled in programs of higher education. In 1997-98, enrolment was 2,132,400, including 1,311,200 students registered in universities, 47 percent in undergraduate programs, 37 percent in master's programs and 16 percent in doctoral programs. The breakdown between program levels varies greatly according to discipline.

The major observable trends are as follows:

- There has been stagnation and even decline in total enrolment since 1995-96, following a period of strong growth. This reflects basic demographics.

- There is strong growth in the IUT sections. From 1990-98, the number of students in IUTs rose by a factor of 1.52, enrolment in preparatory programs by 1.21 and in STS programs by 1.18. The same coefficient for universities was 1.20. Today, only 45 percent of entrants into higher education choose university.

- The growth of engineering schools has dropped since 1994. Between 1990 and 1998, the coefficient of growth was 1.37.

- The number of students registered in commerce, management, accounting and sales has returned to 1990-91 levels.

A Few Facts on Employment of Young People

Three conditions characterize employment of young people in France today:

- high unemployment, especially among those without a degree;
- the important role of degrees in employment (and their growing devaluation); and
- significant differences between the sexes.

High unemployment, especially among those without a degree

An Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) study published a little more than two years ago showed that among the developed countries, France has one of the highest unemployment rates among young people without a degree (*Le Monde*, December 27, 1996).

A survey conducted by the Centre d'études et de recherche sur l'emploi et les qualifications (Centre for Studies and Research on Employment and Qualifications) (CEREQ, 1999) clearly highlights the impact of level of education and a degree on access to employment. This five-year study focusses on the employment status of 640,000 young people who left the education system in 1992. Of the men, 83 percent were working in 1997; for the women in the study, the figure was 71 percent. Twelve percent of the men and 18 percent of the women were unemployed. The remainder had returned to school or were not active in the labour market.

The study suggests:

- The higher the level of education, the better the protection against unemployment (with a ceiling at admission to doctoral programs).

- Obtaining a degree affords additional protection.

- The higher the level of education, the higher the median salary.

- Degrees in the industrial sector provide better protection from unemployment than those in the tertiary sector and generate higher income (except in doctoral programs, where the trend is reversed).

Degrees are a major factor in integration, but tend to lose value in the job market

The number of graduates is rising faster than the number of suitable jobs. This is resulting in a significant devaluation of degrees in the job market. (Forgeot and Gautié, 1996: 6). See Appendix 2 for the statistical data.

Career integration more difficult for young women

The "Generation 92" study (CEREQ, 1999) shows that:

- More young women are unemployed than young men (18 percent compared with 12 percent).

- Young women hold part-time jobs much more often than young men (often not by choice).

- Although girls perform better in school than boys (girls account for about 55 percent of students in the final year of general and technological lycée programs), the median monthly salary for these young women in 1997 was 930 Euros, compared with 1,113 Euros for young men.

These phenomena are probably due, in part, to the concentration of girls in tertiary-sector programs (where they account for three quarters of graduates at all degree levels).

Current Situation: Assessment, Information, Assistance with Transitions and Career Development in France

Attempting to describe the current situation in a few pages is challenging. Key characteristics include the following:

- The structures are constantly changing.

- A large number of diverse structures has been established for these purposes.

- Coherence between national government initiatives and specific regional initiatives is an issue.

- Activities in this field are not as compartmentalized as in the past; training and career development activities often overlap.

One way to differentiate the kinds of career development assistance is based on mandates. Mandates are often defined by target populations served — educated young people, groups with serious social and career integration difficulties, adults seeking (or forced) to redirect their career, etc.

Some institutions target primarily young people or adults, and emphasize counselling (individual or group) or information. This classification has been used in the following pages.

Career Development Services for Youth
The main goal of these services is to help young people build career plans and assist with education, training and employment.

The *Loi d'orientation sur l'éducation* (*Education Reform Act*) of July 10, 1989 stipulates (in s. 1) that the right to education is guaranteed for all citizens, to enable them to integrate into social and work life and fulfil their role as citizens. Section 8 stipulates that the right to guidance and information on education and careers forms part of the right to education. Students develop their education and career plans with the assistance of the institution and the educational community, especially teachers and guidance counsellors.

The *Loi quinquennale relative au travail, à l'emploi et à la formation professionnelle* (*Five-Year Labour, Employment and Skills Training Act*) of December 20, 1993 indicates (s. 54) that before leaving the education system and regardless of the level of education completed, every young person shall receive skills training. S. 56 stipulates that students will have all the information required to develop an education and career plan, particularly information and preparatory training for careers provided through a specific type of work contract and through school courses. This information is provided jointly by guidance counsellors/psychologists, teaching staff, information technology counsellors as well as representatives of professional and trade organizations and chambers of commerce.

This Act delegates, to regions, the responsibility for continuing skills training for young people under age 26, especially in the areas of assessment, information and guidance.

The *Loi d'orientation relative à la lutte contre les exclusions* (*Reform Act respecting the Fight against Exclusion*) of July 29, 1998 institutes the universal right to a new start. Henceforth (s. 4), every unemployed person 16 to 25 years old or every person chronically unemployed or encountering labour market entry problems is entitled to assessment, a skills review and career guidance to make a new start through training, personalized support or a

development path toward employment or the creation or revival of a business.

Several circulars issued under this legislation are noteworthy. These include the following:

- On May 10, 1996, the Ministry of National Education defined the objectives of the youth career mandate: raise career awareness of young people and provide specific training initiatives for youth-at-risk. Initiatives include information and guidance sessions (SIO, lasting four to six weeks), alternating career integration cycles (CIPPA, which may last up to a year) and personalized plans to access qualifications and diplomas (ITHAQUE, lasting 300 to 400 hours).

- On July 31, 1996, the Ministry of National Education covered the implementation of experimental guidance education in colleges by specifying that teachers must play a key role in guidance and that guidance counsellors/psychologists work primarily as technical counsellors in technical institutions, and through personal counselling sessions.

- Under the fight against exclusion reform, the TRACE program (access to employment path) targets young people 16 to 25 years old with no qualifications. This initiative provides mentoring that may last up to 18 months and a personalized career plan. It includes placement and training initiatives focussed on teaching basic skills or attaining specific qualifications. The number of recipients should reach 40,000 in 1999 and 60,000 in 2000.

Advisory bodies

The main structures involved in these measures are outside the school system.

- **Information and guidance centres (CIO)** total 518 and report to the Ministry of National Education (although capital and operating costs of 238 centres are funded by departments). Headed by a director, they are staffed primarily by guidance counsellors/psychologists (COP, numbering about 3,800). They handle requests for counselling from the public and students in their area. They work primarily through counselling interviews, information sessions and group sessions. These counsellors are full-status public employees with five years of advanced study in psychology.

- **Local missions (ML) and assessment, information and guidance offices (PAIO),** numbering 322 and 308 respectively, generally have association status and are headed by an elected local official. They receive 37 percent of their funding from the national government and

63 percent from regions. They have a staff of 6,000 (*Le Monde*, March 13, 1999) with a wide range of qualifications. (They are demanding to be granted status.) They provide individual and group activities. In particular, they pilot the TRACE program for young people (16 to 25) without a school diploma. In practice, however, 40 percent of their clients (1.3 million in 1998) are young people with at least a baccalaureat.

- Each university has **university training and guidance services (SCUIO)** and business **work-study placement services**.

Beyond these three main structures, there is a wide range of other independent agencies providing assessment, information and counselling to young people. These include GRETA (public institutional groups for continuing education), which employ CFC continuing education counsellors, information offices in chambers of commerce, trades, crafts or agriculture, trade centres or houses, and private guidance centres.

Information agencies

Two public agencies develop information specifically for young people.

- The **national information board on employment and training (ONISEP)** (Ministry of National Education) produces many documents (in print, audio-visual and electronic format) for distribution specifically to information and guidance centres and schools, and for sale to interested members of the public.

- The **youth information and documentation centre (CIDJ)** (Ministry of Youth and Sport), produces fact sheets on training, jobs, recreation, etc. With local outlets, its information-documentation officers handle requests for information from young people.

Private companies also design and develop information. These include orientation services and especially the student group l'étudiant (Havas) which has achieved astounding success. This business produces many guides, and organizes impressive trade shows in major cities in France (and even the rest of Europe) at which major training institutions are present.

Initiatives for Adults

Advisory bodies

Three main structures work with adults.

- The **national employment agency (ANPE)** provides placement, counselling, training planning and career assistance services. The agency reports to the Ministry of Employment and Solidarity, and has 840 local offices, employing some 17,000 officers, including employment counsellors. Staff members are trained (in rotation) for six months.

Group sessions (sometimes subcontracted to outside agencies) target primarily the most disadvantaged job applicants in the labour market.

- The **association for adult skills training (AFPA)** (Ministry of Employment and Solidarity) focusses on continuing skills training. It has a staff of about 10,000, including 700 occupational psychologists. Their main role is now to assist the consultants sent by ANPE in developing training plans. The plan is then carried out at AFPA or in another training agency.

- **Inter-institutional review centres (CIBC)** are often associations reporting to a support structure (GRETA, ANPE, AFPA) or non-profit association. There are now about a hundred CIBCs. Their role is to enable workers to analyze their career and personal skills as well as their aptitudes and motivation, to develop a career plan and, where appropriate, a training plan. These reviews can be conducted in CIBCs or other institutions (such as placement agencies). However, little use is made of this program: 80 percent of the 109,000 reviews conducted in 1995 were for unemployed people or young people entering the labour market for the first time. That year, 900 agencies conducted reviews for employees. Most of these were for women 26 to 44 years old in middle management positions. The average length of these reviews was 18 to 20 hours. The average cost was 396 Euros in a CIBC and 1,265 Euros in another agency. The reviews are funded by companies (for employees) or by the Ministry of Employment and Solidarity or local communities.

Some structures specifically target certain groups. These include the association for employment of managers (APEC) (the largest, funded by a special deduction from the pay of managers) and the association for employment of agricultural managers and technicians (APECITA). Retravailler (reworking) specifically targets women returning to work. Some private companies also provide career development assistance services.

Information agencies

The **centre for development of information on continuing education (Centre INFFO)**, created by decree on March 1, 1976, is a non-profit association funded partly by the Ministry of Employment and Solidarity. It produces and distributes brochures, documents and books on skills training and also trains guidance workers and heads of continuing education.

Information and training leadership and resource centres (CARIF) are regional agencies that gather and disseminate information on skills training and trends in economic development. France also has about 30 **training information centres (MIF)** which support continuing education agencies.

Current Strategic Issues

The Minister of Employment and Solidarity, Martine Aubry, has stated:

> The training system has become complex and incomprehensible for many citizens. The large number of players — the national government, social partners, the regions — is definitely an asset in our country but results in confusion, with overlapping roles and responsibilities, and a lack of consistency in delivery of interventions. In addition, some services appear to be far removed from the purposes of career training. All this hampers career development activities at a time when our country is experiencing a pressing need. Forty percent of the labour force still has less than level V qualifications, a very poor performance for an industrialized country such as France.... Yet today, obtaining information, counselling and ultimately training too often requires the stamina of a warrior, especially for the most vulnerable people in small business and the labour market (Aubry, 1998: 11).

These few sentences summarize the main strategic issues facing career development issues in France.

The most basic issue involves reducing unemployment, especially among young people, particularly those least qualified. These are priorities:

- Prepare graduates from the education system for the workplace.
- Develop qualifying skills training for small business.
- Validate the skills and qualifications acquired on the job (i.e., prior learning assessment).

The Minister of Employment and Solidarity noted that training initiatives and measures to provide personalized career development assistance appear to be fairly ineffective in meeting these priorities. There are several reasons for this.

The first involves the complexity of the delivery system.

> Information, guidance and career counselling must result in an individual action plan with clear stages and steps toward employment. Organizations that take part in this mission must achieve greater coordination. The large number of providers may be a source of confusion for users, but it is primarily the lack of consistency and coordination in developing actions that saps the effectiveness of public policy in this area (Aubry, 1998: 14).

The short-term objective, therefore, is to co-ordinate the activities of the various systems for service delivery.

Achieving consistency is no mean feat. As noted, the 1993 *Five-Year Labour, Employment and Skills Training Act* transferred some responsibility in this area to the regions, especially those related to integration for young people in greatest difficulty. Regional policies in this area, however, have differed. As a result, "equal treatment of these groups is no longer assured" (Aubry, 1998: 13). Moreover, policies that have been introduced by the national government since the passage of the act often overlap the initiatives of regional councils. The issue of co-ordinating action by central and regional authorities has become acute.

It should be noted that the oldest information, guidance and counselling structure — centres of information and guidance — is not mentioned by the Minister of Employment and Solidarity. The reason may be that this structure is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, but may also be because of the long history of their integration into the education system. This integration, sought by staff, began in 1922, has continued very consistently, regardless of all political and social changes. Now managers in education periodically lament that counsellors are out of touch with workplace realities. They "forget" that the current situation is the result of their own policies, implemented over decades. One result is that guidance has become essentially academic counselling, and the career guidance counsellors of the 1930s have become guidance counsellors/psychologists.

It is significant that personal and professional "career education" in France is called "guidance education." This essentially is the responsibility of teachers who, in the French school system, are the preferred decision makers in guidance matters involving their students. Their activities have been described as a series of techniques gradually leading the most underprivileged students to accept training paths they would otherwise reject (cf Huteau, 1997, Dumora, 1998, Guichard 1998). Assistance with review and development of personal and professional plans becomes a school guidance process that follows the "logic" of the teaching system and the teachers' judgment categories.

Increasingly, CIOs under the Ministry of National Education are focussing on information linked to school guidance. At the same time this ministry is developing a major program to achieve widespread employment of young people. This gives the impression that national education is advancing in a dispersed fashion, in which the network of CIOs is relying on the educated public. Instead, the focus is shifting to the local offices. Many staff working in these offices have no specific training for assessment and career development assistance.

This leads to the following paradox: qualified staff (guidance counsellors/psychologists) focus essentially on young people in school and appear to limit their activities to fairly simple tasks of providing information about education and training (cf Gentil and Serra, 1997). Conversely, the least qualified staff in this area are responsible for client groups with serious problems and helping these clients to achieve social and career integration.

Key Issues for the Future

The issue of maintaining the structure of information and guidance centres under the Ministry of National Education (and its implementation in conjunction with other intake, information and guidance structures) is one problem to be solved.

"Youth spaces" and "trade centres" are gradually taking the place previously held by CIOs in the areas of career development review and counselling and career guidance. The current situation involves gradual marginalization of CIOs. In this context, two solutions are possible. The first involves continuing to integrate guidance counsellors/psychologists into educational institutions. This would assume a virtual doubling of staff to provide each college and public lycée with at least one counsellor and would leave the issue of guidance in higher education unresolved. It would also likely reinforce the academic-based approach to guidance (unless the "guidance and allocation procedures" were reformed). The problem of access to assistance for all young people leaving the educational system would probably remain unchanged.

The solution of maintaining the CIOs, therefore, appears particularly desirable. From an administrative view, this choice entails resolving the outstanding issue of the legal status of CIOs. The solution, proposed by Pair (February 1998), of bringing together the CIOs into a single public institution is consistent with the legislation of December 20, 1993 granting the regions jurisdiction over student information. A policy stressing the national government's role in career assessment, review and guidance (such as that developed in the act of July 29, 1998) might lead to a more centralized solution.

However, the independence of CIOs has little meaning in the context of current school guidance procedures. Guidance counsellors/psychologists actually play only a marginal role in determining the career futures of students. The current student guidance allocation arrangements lead to an ever more glaring social segregation. Teachers' guidance proposals are based on judgment categories (Mathey-Pierre, 1997) that subtly combine considerations of academic merit more directly with social categorizations. With equivalent academic results, there is some evidence that students from modest backgrounds are gently persuaded to "choose" educational paths with a "lower payoff" in terms of social and workplace integration (cf Duru-

Bellat et al. 1997; Labopin, 1997). In addition, since only one set of skills appears to be valued, these guidance procedures contribute to a social stratification of education initiatives. These considerations emphasize the importance of sweeping reforms of current guidance procedures.

Reforms are especially pressing since the issue of social and workplace integration of young people from various cultures is becoming acute. Several recent publications (Debarbieux, 1999; Favre-Perroton, 1998; Payet, 1995) show that the academic distribution of students implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) reflects criteria that could be seen as "ethnic." At a more basic level, discrimination in hiring based on these criteria is not uncommon (e.g., cf Wieviorka et al.,1992; Balicco, 1999). With the same education, the unemployment rate among immigrant children is much higher than among children of parents born in France. The rise in rude remarks and urban violence (cf Jelen, 1999) and certain movements challenging the non-secular nature of schools (through showy displays of religious identity, for example) must be interpreted in light of these circumstances.

Unequal access to relevant information on training, careers and employment is a key factor contributing to the social problems just cited. Training today is much more readily available (e.g., there are now 15,000 continuing education organizations in France) in a broader range of fields and at more advanced levels than a few years ago. In conjunction with this, changing sectors and new work systems, and new forms of employment are making career information and research much more difficult. There is no shortage of information. There is even too much. However, access carries financial costs, and information in this area probably suffers in the same way as all other knowledge: it reaches those with the least cultural and social capital late (or even too late). An issue is whether the information required for career development activities — and the activities themselves — are no different from any other products (subject to the rules of the marketplace) or, whether it is considered a common good, and thus must be excluded from strictly commercial considerations.

In the case of regulation by the market, we can imagine that information and counselling operations with the poorest "performance" will disappear in the face of competition. The problem of training and supervision of players then becomes less critical if we consider these activities essentially public services.

If we consider that these activities involve the common good (and therefore must help achieve a more just society), government authorities must ensure the quality of service provided to users. In this respect, France's situation is fairly disturbing: many professionals (or players) lack specific training and genuine supervision. Even more disturbing, training organizations appear to have become a preferred area for investment by various sects (statement

by Alain Vivien, head of the government sect-monitoring agency, on Radio France-Culture, February 18, 1999). Specialized companies have also emerged. These provide products (software, tests, educational methods, information brochures), in some instances, of unproved and unvalidated quality. A lack of training among some professionals or players in the field of career development makes them particularly vulnerable to advertising campaigns by these companies.

In the end, the key issue appears to be defining the basic outcomes of career development services. This exercise clearly is based on ethical and political choices. Is the mission of these services to contribute to building a more just society that is more democratic, more integrated and more respectful of cultural differences? Or must the mission focus solely on each person's career development and on immediate career integration into modern-day companies?

Action Required

Various initiatives can be taken to solve some of the problems just described.

- **Reform student guidance-allocation procedures in secondary schools.** The most radical changes would involve removing authority in this area from classroom teachers (and perhaps transferring it to boards of teachers in disciplines that students wish to enter) as well as introducing more objective procedures for assessing diversity in students' aptitudes. This reform could, for example, require young people to submit, to an admissions board, a record of social experience related to their training and employment plans.

- **Give CIOs a legal status, clarify their mission and co-ordinate their activities with those of other structures.** The fact that CIOs are located outside schools provides the huge advantage of mediating agencies. However, these institutions lack a clear legal status. Their specific mission and their relations with neighbouring institutions should be defined in light of the specific psychological expertise of counsellors in these centres.

- **Develop counselling and assistance activities for students geared toward career success and development.** Half of French students enrol in higher education; 45 percent of these enter university, where the failure rate at the undergraduate level is high and where changes in career path are quite common. The information and career development counselling available to students are very inadequate (approximately one counsellor for 20,000 students). How can these activities be developed to reach out to students?

- **Develop methods for validating gains.** "We must build a new, more open system for validating gains that recognizes work experience and broadens the prospects for career mobility." (Aubry, 1998: 13). As the minister points out, "the current system has become complex and unresponsive to needs." The basic issue to be resolved by this measure is the development of strict validation procedures.

- **Combine the expertise of various organizations and provide equivalent services to different client groups.** Client groups in each geographic district need essentially equivalent resources. Combining expertise would mean studying the potential complementarity of institutions and probably having each institution specialize in certain types of interventions and types of client groups.

- **Certify the qualifications of career development workers and professionals.** Ensure that clients receive quality services. Minimal levels of knowledge should be defined, particularly in the fields of the sociology and psychology of counselling, adolescence, career development and work. The same would apply to professional qualifications. Measures can be considered for validating the professional skills of workers already in place. Faced with the spread of questionable intervention methodologies, do we need to place renewed emphasis on worker training? (The briefing note issued on July 25, 1997 by the Office of the Inspector General of Social Affairs on review of skills concludes that "attention must be paid to professionalizing service delivery and establishing rules for empowering beneficiaries.")

- **Supervise practices.** Concern for the quality of service provided to the public requires that the practices of workers and professionals be supervised. Would it be possible to form a body of supervisors with jurisdiction over all career development workers and professionals? Could dissatisfied users file complaints with these supervisors? Should we consider founding a professional association?

- **Provide universal access to accurate, relevant information on training and careers.** This is an especially difficult problem. A government-controlled organization is not necessarily up to the task of providing accurate information on actual operation of the public education system. Yet private information companies cannot operate without making a profit and may be susceptible to the sway of some advertising. Should ethics boards be formed to set certain standards and exercise a measure of control?

- **Develop basic and applied research to devise and teach the use of methods and tools.** School and career guidance practices were developed in France to provide methods and tools based on strict

standards. As early as 1929, France had a scientific journal and specialized research service. These structures (which still exist) are now inadequate to deal with the proliferation of various ideologies and the intense output of cultural information. The creation of a global network of academic researchers specializing in this technology should be considered.

- **Encourage debate on the outcomes of career development practices.** Finding solutions to most of the problems just described cannot be achieved without clearly defining the outcomes of these practices. This definition obviously involves a choice of policies and ethics. Professionals can contribute by defining some of the ethical principles.

Appendix 1: Statistical Data from "Génération 92" (Céreq, 1999)

In the subpopulation of active workers or those seeking employment in 1997, we find that:

- 12.7 percent did not earn a diploma of general education. In this subpopulation, the unemployment rate is 38 percent and the average share of time unemployed between 1992 and 1997 was 38 percent.

- 29.7 percent left school after only brief career training. Among those who earned a diploma, the unemployment rate is 15 percent and the share of time unemployed is 18 percent. For those without a diploma, these figures are 24 percent and 25 percent.

- 21.9 percent reached the baccalaureat level. Among those who earned this degree, unemployment is 11 percent and time unemployed is 15 percent. For those without a diploma, the rates are 16 percent and 19 percent.

- 12.4 percent left school after a brief technical higher education (BTS or DUT). Among those with a diploma, unemployment is seven percent and time unemployed is 12 percent. For those without a diploma: 10 percent and 15 percent.

- Six percent left after two years of general higher studies (DEUG). Holders of these diplomas posted unemployment of eight percent and time unemployed of 11 percent. For those without a diploma: 16 percent and 18 percent.

- 7.4 percent left after extended higher education (licence or master's). Among graduates, unemployment is five percent and time unemployed is 10 percent.

- 5.8 percent completed doctoral studies in university. Unemployment in this group is seven percent and time unemployed is 14 percent.

- 4.2 percent completed a program at a school of commerce or engineering. Among these graduates, unemployment is four percent and time unemployed is 10.1 percent.

Appendix 2: The Devaluation of Degrees

An increase of about 100,000 was recently observed in the number of candidates in various higher technician's licence (BTS) programs between 1989 (then at 130,000) and 1996. In 1991, 30 months after leaving school, 68.1 percent of employed holders of a BTS obtained in 1988 were in intermediate or executive positions. In 1997, for 1994 graduates, this figure had dropped to just 40.6 percent (*Le Monde*, February 11, 1998).

In general terms, a comparison of level of education and employment (using the career and socio-occupational category nomenclature) reveals:

> [T]he proportion of over-educated applicants rose sharply between 1986 and 1995 among those with a baccalaureat or higher degree. It rose by almost 6 points among graduates of a doctoral or university-level school program (from 25.4 percent to 31.2 percent). It rose by a factor of 2.6 among graduates of a masters program (from 7.4 percent to 19.2 percent), and by close to one fourth among graduates of short programs of higher education (from 31.6 percent to 39.1 percent), and by more than half among graduates with a general baccalaureat or higher technician's licence (from 18.5 percent to 28.3 percent) Finally, it increased by almost 2.4 percent among applicants with a vocational and technical baccalaureat (from 9.4 percent to 22.2 percent) (Forgeot and Gautié, 1996: 4).

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Endnote

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